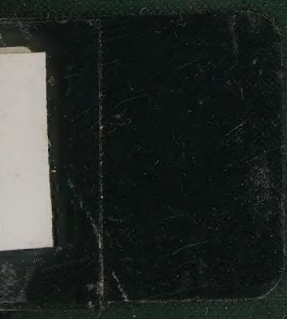

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"I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."
1 *Cor.* xiv, *v.* 15.

Some Biblical scholars have related this passage to a verse of the 47th Psalm, "Sing ye praises with understanding." It may be submitted in all deference that they are mistaken. The word "Maschil" employed by the Psalmist is, I am told, sometimes used widely of that attention which is intelligent and therefore sympathetic—as, for instance, in the phrase "Blessed is he that considereth the poor"—but, like most musical terms, it appears to have been specialized from general usage to a particular and technical sense. It appears, for example, in the superscription of no less than twelve Psalms[1] where, if we compare it

[1] Psalms 32, 42, 44, 45, 52, 53, 54, 55, 74, 78, 89, 142.

with other similarly placed indications, it seems to designate a conspicuously high degree of musical skill or elaboration. We may, perhaps, without extravagance find in those Psalms some notable opportunities for the skill of the composer ; they are either so rich in imagery or so poignant in emotion, as to be specially suitable for a musical setting, and the most probable interpretation is, I believe, that they were to be sung on the scale of a festival performance with unusually large forces of chorus and orchestra. For this the Jewish ritual was well prepared. It is a matter of common knowledge that the Jews, holding themselves debarred on religious grounds from painting and sculpture, poured the whole of their great artistic gifts along the twin channels of music and poetry. The Old Testament is filled with allusions to music which imply a higher degree of knowledge and proficiency than can be ascribed to any

other people in the ancient world. The Singing School established at Jerusalem by David is the largest in recorded history ;[1] the service indicated, though not described, at the dedication of the Temple appears to have surpassed in magnificence all other festival displays of which we have knowledge.[2] It is not surprising that the Psalms in which the whole lyric fervour of the Jewish religion was concentrated should make special provision for their music as well as for their poetry. Despite much recent research we are still in great ignorance as to the nature of the Jewish musical system ; we cannot doubt that it was both a worthy and an intimate expression of their religious life.

The passage in St. Paul, though not less important, is, I believe, entirely different in meaning. The distinction

[1] 1 Chron. xxiii, 5. *See* 1 Chron. xv and xvi.
[2] 2 Chron. v, 12.

which he here draws between "pneuma" and "nous" appears to be the distinction between spiritual fervour which may range from inspiration to mere emotionalism, but which in either case borrows little or nothing from the discursive reason, and that faculty of understanding which is largely analytic in operation and which before all things aims at presenting its world as a coherent and intelligible system. There is no exact parallel to this in pre-Christian Greek philosophy, which rather tended to ignore or depreciate the emotional side of man and to occupy itself with reason as intuitive or discursive, but we shall not, I think, be far wrong if we take St. Paul's use of the word as that which is commonest in ordinary Greek usage: the faculty which directs, not by impulse, but by a clear vision both of the goal at which it aims and of the route by which it hopes to arrive. "Pneuma,"

in a word, is the driving force ; "nous" the controlling force ; and St. Paul tells us that in Church music we want both.

Here a word may be said to those who decry or minimize the place of music in our services ; who hold that it is a distracting influence, which takes away our thoughts from the central fact of worship ; who admit it rather grudgingly to a place in the outer courts, but are averse to giving it any further recognition or encouragement. There can be no doubt as to the sincerity and genuineness of this view. We may even concede that in the most sacred moments of worship, when the soul is in most direct communion with the Divine Presence, nothing is required—hardly even words—to express the pure rapture of adoration. But this is not to deny that music may have and should have its accessory part in the service, soothing, refreshing, ennobling the soul of the

worshipper, and so preparing it for that spiritual union in which all worship is consummated. To this may be added that our act of worship is in Church essentially corporate and that music has a special power of awakening and elevating the sense of corporate union between man and man. To remove it altogether from our services would be a measure so drastic as not to be seriously contemplated. The only practical questions are, what place it should hold and what qualities should be demanded from it.

And herein we have the testimony of the whole Christian Church from its foundation. After the Last Supper Our Lord and His disciples sang together, probably the hymn called "The great Hallel," extending from the 113th to the 118th Psalm, and including in the 116th a wonderful premonition of the agony and the glory that were to come. St.

Paul not only enjoins the singing of "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,"[1] but in all probability quotes some early specimens of Christian hymnology, e.g., the passage beginning "Awake, thou that sleepest" (Eph. v, 14); possibly also, the statement of the Creed in 1 Tim. iii, 16, and the Doxology in 1 Tim. vi, 15-16. The Apocalypse also is full of references to song[2] and clearly implies some practice of hymn singing in the Church to which it was addressed. By the beginning of the second century we can add a valuable piece of external testimony. Pliny's letter to Trajan,[3] written from Pontica somewhere between 113 and 115, speaks of the Christians as

[1] Eph. v, 19. Col. iii, 16. Some commentators hold that this refers only to private worship, but, I think, without sufficient reason.

[2] e.g. iv, 8-11; v, 9-10; vii, 12; xi, 17-18; xiv, 3; xix, 1-7.

[3] Pliny Epp. 96 (97). Eusebius (*Eccl. Hist.* V, xxviii) gives this more fully: *ψαλμοὶ δὲ ὅσοι καὶ ᾠδαὶ ἀδελφῶν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὑπὸ πιστῶν γραφεῖσαι τὸν λόγον του Θεοῦ τὸν Χριστὸν ὑμνοῦσι Θεολογοῦντες.*

coming together at dawn "carmenque Christo sicut deo dicere secum invicem." The last word of this passage seems to imply some practice of antiphonal singing, which, according to tradition, was introduced into the Christian Church about this time by St. Ignatius. At any rate, we have early and unmistakable record of the practice of singing in Christian worship.

It would take us far beyond our prescribed limits if we traced the history of Church music in any detail.[1] No more than a momentary reference can be made to the great and gathering collection of Christian Hymns which appeared during the first centuries of the Church, or the various developments of the Liturgy which in Western Europe were gradually absorbed or superseded by the Roman

[1] A general sketch of Early Church Music, with a bibliography, may be found in Möller's *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. I (trans. Rutherford), pp. 527-9.

rite. But it may be of interest briefly to epitomize its history in our own land. According to Bede we owe our Church music very largely to the encouragement of two great contemporaries, Wilfred and Theodore of Tarsus. The latter of these, the first Archbishop whose authority the whole country recognized, was amongst other things a great educator and seems to have assigned to religious music a very high place in his scheme. Wilfred summoned from Kent a musician called Eddi, surnamed Stephen, and through him and his pupils disseminated a knowledge of the art, which soon extended far and wide over the northern region.[1] It is worth while noting that when Gerald Barry wrote his Itinerary in the twelfth century, he specially notes the musical ability of the northern people and implies that it had spread far beyond the limits of formal instruction and that it

[1] Bede iv, 2.

was a matter of universal practice.[1] England was, indeed, throughout the Middle Ages, famous in music. The earliest composer whose reputation spread over civilized Europe was John Dunstable; among his contemporaries there are a score of names recorded with specimens of their compositions in the Selden and Old Hall MSS. One of the most notable of them was King Henry VI, and the tradition of royal patronage and even of royal participation lasts with only one break from his time to the death of Elizabeth. In the sixteenth century our school of Church composers was unsurpassed even by the Flemings and the Italians ; from Fayrfax and Taverner to Byrd and Gibbons it is of astonishing

[1] Nor was this ability confined to the North. Indeed the earliest home of English Church Music seems to have been Kent, and the tradition was worthily maintained and advanced by Aldhelm at Sherborne and Dunstan at Glastonbury. The first great secular part-song that we possess was written by a Reading monk named John of Fornsete about 1240.

genius and abundance : over five hundred works by Byrd are now accessible ; Tallis was hardly less prolific ; of the others, Tye, White, Parsons, Farrant, Gibbons—to mention those only who wrote principally for the Church service—are masters who for inspiration and skill may claim a place among the great composers of the world. During the seventeenth century, though at the Restoration the idiom of Church music considerably altered, the tradition of excellence was maintained until it came to a second climax in Purcell, who, in his way and within his limits, may bear comparison with our great Elizabethans. Even through the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, that dark age when English music seemed almost upon its death-bed, there was still one slender thread of life preserved in the services of the English Church. From Greene to Battishill, from Battishill to the elder

Wesley, and so through the younger Wesley to our own day there was always some work which, though slight and comparatively unimportant, has yet a touch of quality which redeems it from insignificance. And when, about 1880, the renaissance of English music began it was inaugurated chiefly by two men who wrote much of their work for the service of Religion, and by whom the tradition of our great renown has once more been put in the way of revival.

We have now reached two points in our enquiry: first, the vindication *a priori* of the place of music in the service; secondly, the corroboration of this by the history and practice of the Christian Church. It follows to consider what consequences arise from these.

We may, I suppose, lay it down as undisputed that the object of corporate worship is twofold: first, that it is an offering to God, which we plainly mean

when we call it a service; secondly, that it is a means of spiritual refreshment, "the strengthening and refreshing of our souls," and hence for the benefit of the worshipper. Of these two aspects the first is primary, the second consequential. If their respective claims were in any way discrepant those of service to God should take the first place; if, as I shall try to show presently, there is and can be no such discrepancy, then we are brought with combined and reduplicated force to the conclusion that no music should be allowed in Church which is not the noblest of its kind:

> "Our best is bad, nor stands Thy test;
> Still, it should be our very best."

There can be no place at all in divine worship for carelessness, or slovenliness of presentation, or personal vanity, or mutual complaisance, still less for that ignorant presumption which, like Dio-

trephes, loves to have the pre-eminence and claims it without any of the gifts or qualifications by which alone it can be deserved. Indeed, in any part of the Church service except music we should accept this without hesitation. The words of our liturgy, the words of our Bible are at any rate placed beyond the profanation of illiterate hands. We cannot, without a feeling of grievous offence, think of any tampering with these which should replace them in the service by sentimentalism or triviality or colloquial phrase. A most undesirable book has recently appeared which retells the story of Our Lord's life in terms of modern social and commercial conditions without one spark of dignity or reverence, with no recognition of what we mean by calling Him divine. May I ask you to contemplate for a moment, if you can bear it, the proposal that you should in future read the second lesson from this instead of from the Gospels?

And yet (I say it in all sober earnestness) the history of our Church music has sometimes shown aberrations which are comparable with such a proposal.

There are, in fact, three diseases from which religious music can suffer: the disease of virtuosity, which over-elaborates the technique of composition and so tends to lose sight of its meaning; the disease of theatricalism, which over-emphasizes the meaning at the expense of true dignity and reverence; and the disease of sentimentalism, which enervates the meaning by relaxing it into a soft and facile prettiness, unworthy alike of the sincerity of religion and of the chastity of art. All these may be successively illustrated at three critical periods in the history of our Church music. The first made its appearance in the services of the Mediæval Church. The Mass was in Latin, and, therefore, unintelligible to a vast majority of the worshippers; the methods of

polyphonic writing were beginning to spread among the composers of Western Europe, bringing with them all the delight of beautiful sound and skilful craftsmanship. It is intelligible that the composers of this liturgical music should regard intricacy and musical erudition almost as ends in themselves and should more and more disregard and even conceal under florid melodies the significance of the sacred text. This practice attracted the attention of the Church at least as early as the first quarter of the fourteenth century and was severely censured by Pope John XXII, who condemned in set terms the wantonness and irreligion of the new music and its entire unsuitability to purposes of devotion.[1] One clause in

[1] The relevant portions of the censure are printed in Wooldridge's *Oxford History of Music*, Vol. II, p. 89. They end with the characteristic sentence: "Currunt enim et non quiescunt, aures inebriant et non medentur; gestis simulant quod depromunt: quibus devotio quærenda contemnitur, vitanda lascivia propagatur." Nearly two centuries earlier Ailred of

the accusation is particularly noticeable, that in which he points out that the themes of the Mass are often taken from secular songs. A survey of the reasons which led to this practice would carry us too far from our present theme ; there can be no doubt that the practice existed, many Masses were written by Continental composers on a French popular song, others by English composers on the melody of a love lyric which, however beautiful and passionate, was too well known to make for edification. It may be urged that the practice was not quite so irreligious as it sounds; many of the secular tunes were noble and dignified, some, even, were not unworthy of a place in sacred worship. To take some later instances, it is well known that our hymn tune " Innsbruck " was first written as

Rievaulx was denouncing even more severely the extravagances of Church Music, but he wrote as a controversialist and without authority. *See* Coulton's *Five Centuries of Religion*, app. 23.

the farewell song of an apprentice setting out from his native home; more remarkable still, our Passion choral, which seems to breathe the very spirit of devotion, was originally set to the plaint of a disappointed lover. A good deal, in short, depends on the character of the melody in question. To the two instances just mentioned no reasonable exception could be taken; they do not excuse the employment of "Rule Britannia" with closely parodied words, which may be actually found in hymn books of the early nineteenth century. The real fault of the mediæval composers was not so much that they employed secular melodies as that they spread out the syllables of the text until these no longer conveyed any intelligible meaning—the long, trailing tendrils of melody stretched out over half a page before you came to the second syllable of the word. Even Papal prohibition was not strong enough to stem this cur-

rent. The music grew more and more elaborate, more and more self-centred, until in the early part of the sixteenth century Erasmus caustically described the Church music of his time as an infringement of St. Paul's rule against speaking in an unknown tongue. It had, in fact, ceased to be singing with the understanding, and had sunk back almost to the level of glossolalia.

A well-known story, on which some needless doubt has been thrown, tells us that at the Council of Trent this attempt at purifying Church music was renewed, that a committee of Cardinals was appointed by Pius IV to restore discipline, and that the situation was saved by the discovery, and performance in the Sistine Chapel, of a Mass which Palestrina had written a few years previously for Pope Marcellus. This Mass is still extant, and there can be no doubt that its purity, its dignity and its intense religious feeling

make it worthy to vindicate the place of music in worship. We in England are, perhaps, more concerned with the reforms instituted by Cranmer, who, in his famous Letter on the Litany,[1] required that the elaborate and intricate polyphony of the time should be discarded and replaced by a simple, close-fitting music which should set one note to each syllable and so allow the words to be clearly heard and understood. This rule was, perhaps, not intended to be rigorously and literally observed; it set an ideal rather than enjoined a practice, but it had an immediate effect on English Church music. To it we owe that beautiful anthem, "Lord, for Thy tender mercy's sake," Tallis's "Dorian Service," and, with considerable assistance both from Germany and from Geneva, the development of the English Psalm tune. During the great period of

[1] 1544. These injunctions were renewed in the early *Visitations* of Edward VI.

English Church composition our music, though often rich and gorgeous, is more simple in texture than that of the preceding generation, and is far more conscious of its function as a vehicle and interpreter of the text.

II The second disease appeared at the end of the seventeenth century. From 1600 onwards the world of music was being gradually overspread by the two forms of opera and oratorio which started almost at the same time and introduced a comparatively new method and conception of musical art. They were not at first very clearly distinguished from one another. The churches were mainly restricted to liturgical use, there was no such thing as a concert-room in Europe, opera and oratorio were both given in the theatre, opera sometimes took its subject from Holy Writ, oratorio was sometimes given with scenery and action, hence they introduced into the musical

life of Western Europe a more distinctively dramatic ideal than had been known to the sixteenth century, and, as always happens, a method which, in the hands of a great master, is dramatic may easily become theatrical in the hands of his followers and imitators. At any rate, the fashionable Church music of the early eighteenth century was far too often profaned with devices more suitable to the playhouse—the "light quirks of music" satirized in a famous couplet by Pope. Here again the question was very largely one of balance and proportion. Just as good readers of the Bible drive home its meaning by the right use of cadence and emphasis, and bad readers who attempt this without understanding exaggerate it until the sanctity of the text is sacrificed and its dignity seriously imperilled, so we may find in Purcell and Blow and Pelham Humfrey a true sense of dramatic values, where lesser

men surrender the central position to the attacks of triviality and sensationalism.

Once more our Church music recovered itself in course of time, though it moved for nearly a century within very narrow and constrained limits, and then in the middle of the nineteenth century appeared a third disease, perhaps the most insidious of them all. In much of our secular music at this time there was a lapse into softness and effeminacy, to weak sentiment lightly felt and expressed mainly by a few undistinguished catchwords. As the claims of pure technique had been over-stated in the Middle Ages, so they were now far too much ignored : " scripsimus indocti doctique "; the doors of the sanctuary were thrown open and anyone who would might come in and minister. There has probably been no form of any art in the history of the world which has been so over-run by the

unqualified amateur as English Church music from about 1860 to about 1900. Many of our professional musicians at this time stood also at a low level of culture and intelligence and were quite content to flow with the stream, so that our Service books, and still more our Hymn books, were filled with dilutions of Mendelssohn, reminiscences of Spohr and, worse than either, direct imitations of Gounod : as incongruous with the splendour of our Authorized Version and of our Book of Common Prayer as were some of the stained glass windows of that period with the strength and dignity of our Church architecture. Thirty years ago we were perhaps at our lowest ebb. This music was deplorably easy to write, it required little or no skill of performance, it passed by mere use and wont into the hearts of the congregation, it became a habit like any other, and it is only during comparatively recent years that any serious

attempts have been made towards eradicating it.

It follows to consider one or two practical questions and especially to allay one or two very natural misgivings. Before dealing with these, I should like once more to repeat as a matter of common agreement that we all acknowledge in Church music some standard of beauty and dignity and reverence below which we will not willingly sink, and that the sole question at stake, if when the mists are cleared away there is indeed any question remaining, will centre on the exact point at which we are to draw our line of exclusion. A distinguished Church musician has told me that he once heard in a church in Florence a light operatic air played at the most sacred moment of the Mass service; I myself have heard in England examples not less frivolous and irreverent. We are all agreed about the exclusion of these. How, then, and on

what principles are we to determine our line of admission? And here I would urge in the first place that we should give to the music of our services the same attention that we pay to their other constituents, that we should not allow it to suffer through mere carelessness and indifference on the ground that it is "only the music"; that however poor our resources and however restricted our methods we should, at any rate, not treat the claims of the art with contempt or disregard. Many of our country churches will supply an example from the ingoing voluntary. The player hastens from the vestry to the organ-stool, is allowed wholely insufficient time to play even one of the chorals of Bach or Brahms which would set worshippers in tune for the whole service; if he venture to perform a set piece at all he is required to stop in the middle of a bar (as a man might stop in a sentence before he came to the

verb) at the moment when the officiating clergyman reaches the reading desk; if, in despair, he gives up a set piece and fills the gap with improvising, he dare not advance beyond a few unmeaning sequences or modulations lest his thread be again cut short; and right across the middle of his ill-woven texture there strikes, in a series of jagged discords, the bell which is summoning the last stragglers of the congregation. It is no great reform to suggest that the bell should cease before the organist begins and that he should be allowed as much as three minutes in order that the service may be prefaced by a dignified and seemly introduction. If this is too much to ask, if we grudge three minutes to the service, then we might at least save some members of the congregation from real pain and disheartenment by omitting this voluntary altogether.

Another example of our *incuria* has

already been mentioned, namely our habit of admitting to the services of the Church compositions by men who have no qualifications which should win them acceptance.[1] I have heard hymn tunes in church which were written by children, others which were written by amateurs without musical training, others which were included for no better reason than to gratify the vanity of some very undistinguished organist. These are introduced, not as a matter of preference, but simply because the authorities concerned do not care enough about the matter to keep them out; they are of no more value than the withered leaves that blow in at the door and they have no more right to a place in the sanctuary. The first condition, then, is that we should not allow our Church music to drift from sheer

[1] The Council of Laodicea forbade the use in church of ψαλμοί ἰδιωτικοί, i.e., psalms written by private and unauthorized persons (ab hominibus imperitis compositos). See a note to Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* VII, xxiv, in Valesius.

want of guidance, and if it be urged that this is a truism, I would venture to reply that it is one of those truisms which are received by all with lip service, but not by all with practical conviction. The evil of which I have spoken is far less prevalent now than it has been, but it has not yet wholly disappeared.

And if we ask what tests we are to apply we have two ready to our hand: one the actual standard reached by the great composers, the other that afforded by our liturgy itself. The best way to make men dissatisfied wtih bad or unworthy work is to familiarize them constantly with the best; the negative methods of prohibition and denunciation are never really effective because they impose their standard from without. It is far better that we should encourage it to grow from within; partly because it is then far more firmly established, partly because it makes the unity of the congre-

gation more corporate and more organic. Let us, therefore, begin with discarding all music which, when it is seriously considered, is recognized by everyone as unworthy, either because it is dull, or because it is meaningless, or because it is trivial, or because it degrades religious feeling into a soft and luscious emotionalism. There is no need at all that our music should be austere; there is every need that it should be devout, and within these limits it may cover a wide emotional range and many varieties of presentation. Religious worship does not mean continually losing ourselves in an *o altitudo* ; it has room for psalm and parable, for delight in colour and pageantry and architectural form. In like manner our music may make its appeal to us on many sides and in many ways. We should for instance, be ill-advised to confine ourselves strictly to any one school or method of composition; most unwise to

force on a reluctant congregation a method to which it is naturally averse. We may view different methods and styles with the widest sympathy; only there must be no compromising on the question of excellence.

Our standard, then, must be set as high as possible, which means as high as is compatible with practical conditions. It would, no doubt, be idle to put forward an ideal which would be from the nature of the case incapable of attainment. And here I should take note of a misgiving which has been often felt by those who would agree with the principle of selection but who doubt how far it can be carried out in practice. "Your standard," they say, "may well be set up in cathedrals and collegiate churches where the resources are sufficient, where the tradition is long and dignified and where a high degree of achievement is not only expected but attained; surely, the case is different

with the Parish Churches which, after all, afford to the large majority of our people their most immediate opportunity of worship." These, it has been said, cannot afford to expend money on organs and choirs and purchases of elaborate music, nor is it advisable that they should do so. They dwell among their own people, they serve the needs of simple folk who would be deterred or bewildered by elaboration. This misgiving really depends upon a very common confusion of thought, the confusion between selection and performance. Over and over again when I have been staying in country parsonages I have been told that I should enjoy the music on Sunday because the church was "rather proud of its choir." When I have asked what the choir was going to sing I have as a rule received no answer, except a look of blank astonishment that anyone should put such a question. This, if I may say so, is begin-

ning entirely at the wrong end. Our standard is far more easily reached by selection of music intrinsically noble and beautiful than by any skill or elaboration of performance. And I would go further still. One of the greatest dangers of our Church music at present is the ambition, not according to knowledge, which leads simple or untrained choirs to attempt works beyond their capacity. Great and elaborate services and anthems, which form the chief glory of our musical history, find their appropriate setting in Abbey and Collegiate Church and Cathedral ; they are there in their own surroundings, they can be given with resources for which the requisite provision has been made. But the Parish Churches can do equally beautiful music and can do it so as to satisfy the most exacting of reasonable critics without ever passing beyond the limits of work which is within their compass. One of the most moving

services that I have ever heard in my life, one that remains and will always remain in my memory as a sheer joy, was given at a village church in Berkshire, with a tiny organ, an ill-paid organist and a voluntary choir of villagers and school children. It consisted entirely of the ordinary chants for Psalms and Canticles, three well-known Hymns and a short and reverent voluntary at the opening and at the close. But every melody was of its kind perfect, and the singing, though to some degree rude and untutored, so fitted the service and the surroundings that it was completely satisfying to the worshipper. In just the same way I have heard one of the greatest orators of our Church preach a village sermon in which there was probably no word that could not be understood by the most unlettered member of the congregation, but it was in its own way as complete and as beautiful as the highest

eloquence that I have ever heard at Oxford or Westminster. It is, in short, quite possible to keep the music of our Church on its highest level without any addition to its burdens or its liabilities.

There is another difficulty which needs only to be stated in order to point the way to its own refutation. I have heard it said that if all music short of the very best were excluded from our services we should not have enough left to give sufficient scope and variety to our services, but should be driven to a comparatively narrow and uninteresting counter-change of a few established compositions. The answer to this is the familiar logical rejoinder, "*Nego minorem.*" The belief that we have an insufficient amount of first-rate work can be entertained only by those who have not had the opportunity or the desire to study the question in its historical bearings. Our Church music has a record of five hundred years

from the fifteenth century to the present day ; this gift of great composition is not only sufficient, but abundant, there is enough and more than enough, good measure pressed down, shaken together and running over. For it must be remembered (and this is an important aspect of the question) that we do not want an infinite variety in our Church music. It is notorious that people welcome great tunes the more warmly as they become familiar with them. The very influence of habit can be made a potent factor in worship and it is as easy in this matter to acquire good habits as bad. Most of our hymn books, for example, are too large ; nearly all (not quite all) contain enough noble melodies to last through the Christian year, but they weaken their general influence by including a great deal of inferior work which may now and then be tried as an experiment and presently take root, like a weed in a

crevice, from which it cannot, without difficulty, be dislodged. Three hundred hymns, fifty canticle services, about as many chants, and not more than one hundred anthems would form between them a corpus of Church music more than large enough for all practical requirements, and such a corpus could easily be made. In some parts of the service an even greater uniformity might be desirable. We have no finer setting of the Nicene Creed than that by Merbecke, and this might be used at all ordinary services with, perhaps, some special setting when occasion arose. But all these questions are matters of balance and adjustment which every centre might settle for itself. The main contention is that within the limits of first-rate work there is abundant room for the satisfaction of all needs.

A more fundamental objection remains. It has been said that the whole question is one of individual taste, that for tastes

there is proverbially no accounting, that on this point there are so many divergent and even discordant views that any attempt to obtain a consensus or set up an acknowledged standard must end in disaster. This objection takes two forms : first, the denial of any authoritative criterion at all ; secondly, the plea that even if there is such a criterion, work which manifestly falls below it should nevertheless be admitted because many of the congregation find it attractive. " Hymn tunes which you call bad," say the objectors, " have their uses in that they bring people to church who would otherwise stay away and make them join in the service when otherwise they would be silent." Nor is this plea to be lightly dismissed without consideration. It obviously attaches itself to the second of our two objects of worship instead of the first. It seems, indeed, if one presses the matter closely, to be tampering with

the purity of the service in order to meet some real or fancied need in the worshipper, but it is so often urged, and with such evident sincerity, that we cannot lay it aside as of no account.

But, again, the answer appears to be twofold. In the first place, this appeal to the psychology of the congregation is in itself dangerous ; it has led to many abuses in the past and it will lead to many more if it is not checked. I will venture to hold that in the interests of the congregation itself, to mention no higher issue, an established and authoritative standard is far better than an anarchy of individual opinion. Secondly, though I should hold this argument in itself to be conclusive, there is another from a different side, which may be added in its support. Will those who believe that they are attracting congregations by bad or trivial music reflect how many of their congregation they have been keeping away ? I know

from my own circle of experience that a good many people are seriously hurt and offended by these outbreaks of triviality or sentimentalism and I believe that their number is steadily increasing with the spread of musical education in this country and the gradual advance in musical taste and judgment. May I offer a parallel ? The drawing-room songs of my youth were incomparably weaker both in style and in substance to those which are finding currency at the present day. I believe that an exactly similar change is taking place in our appreciation of Church music. Thirty years ago it was actually possible to praise an anthem or a hymn tune on the ground that it was pretty ; to-day we are at least learning to keep that incongruous adjective outside the church door. Again, we need not, I think, be alarmed at the supposed difficulty of finding an authoritative standard. Such a standard is, indeed, in process of

gradual formation ; the very improvement that has taken place is a witness of this. The stream is flowing in so steady a direction that those who resist it are in danger of being cast up on the banks. The leaders of musical life in this country have themselves given much attention to the ennobling and purifying of our Church music and those of us who have been watching the event can see already the result of their efforts. The old plea of popular music, which really meant vulgar music under a more dignified name, is losing all the efficacy that it ever possessed. A significant fact is that the worst Church music now in use is not that which is being written by the present generation, but that which still lasts with diminishing vitality from its predecessor. We can all remember a time when Dr. Bunnett's Evening Service and Sir Joseph Barnby's tune to " For all the saints " were being sung in every

church throughout the land ; now one of them is fortunately dead, and the other even more fortunately superseded.

Here, again, we may find an analogy between our Church music and the other great arts which have elevated and ennobled mankind. Fashion has sometimes made a poor melody popular for the moment ; it has never made it immortal. As civilization proceeds and the great body of human thought and feeling grows up from generation to generation, so all petty or insignificant work falls away and perishes of its own inanition, while the great achievements are more and more built into the structure and substance of human nature. Sometimes through some historic accident we may lose sight of good work for a while, as we lost sight of our Elizabethan composers : I believe that it always recurs in due course and that its influence, direct or indirect, is everlasting. Art is not a toy or a luxury

or a form of self-indulgence ; it is the expression of an ideal of beauty, and through beauty of truth and goodness, of the Divine nature itself seen in one of its essential aspects. And this means that our response to it is in very truth an expression of our highest nature, that it sets in vibration chords which have been touched by the Divine Artificer and whose highest office is to resound to His praise. It rests with us that we offer for His acceptance the best instrument that we can fashion and that we keep it at all times in tune for His service.

APPENDIX

The Church Music Society, which is prepared to give, when requested, advice as to the selection and performance of Service Music, has issued a number of brochures dealing with the various aspects of the question: hymns, anthems, canticle settings, chants, choir training, and the like.

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